

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ARA-10 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 HA-05
CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8481
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
USINT HAVANA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SANA
USMISSION USNATO
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 03342

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, UR, ET, SO
SUBJECT: SOVIET MFA OFFICIAL DISCUSSES HORN

SUMMARY: SOVIET MFA OFFICIAL TOLD ITALIAN POLITICAL
COUNSELOR THAT SITUATION IN THE HORN COULD BE CONSIDERED
WITH LESS PESSIMISM THAN SOME WEEKS AGO, GIVEN MILITARY
DEVELOPMENTS AND SOMALI REALIZATION THAT IT CANNOT
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RECEIVE LARGE-SCALE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE; THAT MOSCOW
DOES NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF A "FACE-SAVING"
AGREEMENT THAT WOULD PERMIT SOMALI FORCES TO WITHDRAW
RATHER THAN TO BE EXPELLED; THAT ONLY THE ETHIOPIAN GOV-
ERNMENT CAN DETERMINE THE TENURE OF CUBAN TROOPS IN
ETHIOPIA; AND THAT MOSCOW'S ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA IS
GIVEN ON THE PREMISE THAT IT IS FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES.

END SUMMARY.

1. ITALIAN POLITICAL COUNSELOR HAS GIVEN US A READOUT ON HIS RECENT CALL ON SERGEI YAKOVLEVICH SINITSIN, DEPUTY CHIEF, THIRD AFRICAN DEPARTMENT, MFA.

2. DURING THE CALL, SINITSIN REITERATED AT SOME LENGTH THE STANDARD SOVIET THESIS JUSTIFYING SOVIET ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA. HE CLAIMED THAT SOVIET ACTIONS ARE IN RESPONSE TO ETHIOPIA'S REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE TO RESIST SOMALI AGGRESSION. HE HELD THAT "EVERYONE" SHOULD CONDEMN THIS AGGRESSION AND PRESSURE SOMALIA TO WITHDRAW.

3. SINITSIN STATED THAT THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE HORN COULD BE CONSIDERED WITH LESS PESSIMISM THAN SOME WEEKS AGO ON THE BASIS OF MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS AND SOMALI REALIZATION THAT IT CANNOT RECEIVE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE IN THE QUANTITY IT HAD HOPED. THE SOVIET UNION CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT ETHIOPIA SHOULD NOT AND CANNOT AGREE TO NEGOTIATE BEFORE A SOMALI WITHDRAWAL, BUT IT DOES NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT A "FACE-SAVING" FORMULA CAN BE FOUND FOR THE WITHDRAWAL - ESPECIALLY AFTER SOMALIA HAS NOW ADMITTED IT HAS REGULAR FORCES IN THE OGADEN.

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4. SINITSIN EVADED A QUESTION ON WHETHER THIS FORMULA COULD INCLUDE WITHDRAWAL OF OTHER EXTERNAL FORCES, SUCH AS CUBAN TROOPS. HE RESPONDED THAT IT IS UP TO THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT, IN ITS SOVEREIGNTY, TO DECIDE WHAT KIND OF ASSISTANCE IT NEEDS TO REPEL AGGRESSION.

5. ASKED IF THE SOVIETS ARE SURE THE ETHIOPIANS WOULD STOP AT THE SOMALI BORDERS, AND IF MOSCOW HAS ATTACHED SUCH A CONDITION TO ITS ASSISTANCE, SINITSIN ANSWERED THAT MOSCOW "BELIEVES" THE ETHIOPIAN STATEMENT THAT ETHIOPIA DOES NOT DESIRE TO INVADE SOMALIA. SOVIET ASSISTANCE, HE CLAIMED, IS GIVEN ON THE PREMISE THAT IT IS FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES.

6. COMMENT: SINITSIN'S PARA 3 COMMENT ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A "FACE-SAVING" FORMULA FOR SOMALI WITHDRAWAL IS INTERESTING, BUT COMING TO US AS IT DOES, IN A SECOND HAND FASHION, WE ARE RELUCTANT TO ATTACH TOO MUCH SIGNIFICANCE TO IT. SOVIET LINE AS FAR AS WE KNOW REMAINS QUITE FIRM ON NECESSITY FOR COMPLETE SOMALI WITHDRAWAL PRIOR TO POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA. WHEN ASKED FOR HIS OWN THOUGHTS

ON MEANING OF SINITSIN'S COMMENT, ITALIAN POLITICAL COUNSELOR THOUGHT HE "MIGHT" HAVE MEANT THE POSSIBILITY OF WITHDRAWAL OF ONLY SOMALI REGULAR ARMY UNITS AND HEAVY EQUIPMENT.

7. BASED ON THE REPORTS OF THE INTENSIVE MOPPING UP OPERATIONS WHICH TOOK PLACE BEHIND THE ETHIOPIAN LINES AFTER THE LAST MINI-OFFENSIVE PLUS OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE CURRENT SOVIET POLITICAL LINE, WE DISCOUNT THIS POSSIBLE INTERPRETATION OF SINITSIN'S WORDS. MATLOCK

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